



Appleby Archaeology



Autumn 2004

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Group News

The weather this summer has been rather unpredictable but we have been out and about. In May and June we completed the first stage of our survey of Kirkland which involved recording two potash pits discovered by the group last year. In early August we visited sites on the Warcop Army Range with the MOD archaeologist, Naill Hammond. Martin Joyce reports on this on pages 2-3.

I have been carrying out geophysical surveys around England and Scotland for Durham University. The results can be inconclusive as you probably know from watching Time Team. However there have been some successes, including the discovery of a new Roman site near Gloucester. Ridge and furrow seems to turn up almost everywhere we survey! The jobs are very varied; for example I have recently been in Fife trying to detect a lost 19th century golf course. The National Trust for Scotland wish to recreate this as a historic attraction!

Our treasurer, Tricia Crompton, has been further afield and has just returned from an excavation in Slovakia. Hopefully we will all get to hear about this in the near future as she has promised to give a talk at our next AGM and Member's Evening. If you

have a topic you would like to talk about for 20 minutes then please let one of the committee members know. There is plenty of time to prepare and we are here to help.

Our programme of evening talks will begin again in September (see back page). In October we will be participating in Societies Week at Kendal Museum (23rd-30th October) which will provide a valuable networking opportunity. If you are interested in helping with a display or want further details then contact our Secretary, Phyllis Rouston (01768353463).

Below is a new feature in which I intend to report news from the wider world of archaeology. If you have anything to report please send it to me at the email address on the back page.

Martin Raiton
(newsletter editor)

Archaeology Headlines

Archaeologists at Vindolanda have unearthed 30 yards of wooden mains which fed the fort with water from nearby springs. Amazingly, the mains were still working and carrying water - almost 2,000 years after they were first installed. "The fact that they were still working is quite incredible but it was also a nuisance because they

flooded the excavation trenches which had to be pumped out every day," said Robin Birley, director of excavations. The pipes had been created by drilling huge lengths of alder, which were joined together by oak pegs.

The man who may have helped organise the building of Stonehenge was a settler from continental Europe. The latest tests on the Amesbury Archer show he was originally from the Alps region, probably Switzerland, Austria or Germany. The tests also show that the gold hair tresses found in the grave are the earliest gold objects found in Britain. The grave of the Archer, who lived around 2,300BC, contained about 100 items, more than ten times as many objects as any other burial site from this time.

The annual Viking festival, organised by the York Archaeological Trust, has been launched in York. The climax of the festival will be a reconstruction of the Coronation of Erik Bloodaxe in York Minster, with a candlelit procession and authentic ceremony, surrounded by over 100 Vikings.

Killhope Lead Mining Museum has been named as the winner of the first Guardian Family Friendly Museum award.

(www.online-archaeology.co.uk)

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Extreme Archaeology

A visit to Warcop Firing Range with Niall Hammond

A combined expeditionary force made up of eighteen members, variously of Appleby Archaeology and the Matteredale Society, enjoyed an unusual field trip to the Warcop firing range on Saturday 7th August. Under the leadership of MOD Archaeologist Niall Hammond (formerly County Archaeologist for Durham) they were given a privileged tour of the archaeological sites distributed across the range. Eighteen amateur archaeologists were very relieved to complete the day with the standard complement of arms and legs and no obvious collateral damage.

In retrospect it seems obvious that a firing range should contain lethal weaponry but it was nevertheless a shock to turn through the camp gates out of sleepy Warcop and meet truckloads of troops in full camouflage gear. Assault rifles were being casually swung around and large boxes of ammunition were being dragged into heaps. A "range briefing" by the RSM did nothing to lift the apprehension. The range had been in existence since 1942 when it was opened as part of the training preparations for D Day. Regrettably, not everything lobbed up onto the fells had gone off. Nevertheless if any of us were to step on anything nasty then this was basically our own stupid fault. Killing people is the whole point of the army after all! As we were driven, trembling, out onto the range, the

Security status board stated that "Bikini Alert" was Black. It was unclear whether this was a good thing or not.

The range itself proved much more extensive and complex than one could possibly have imagined. Once out of the cars and on foot, it also proved to be a good deal rougher than many of us would have preferred. The broken hummocky ground and tussocky grassland stretched for miles in every direction. Niall explained the problems of MOD archaeology. On the one hand, the Ministry are very keen to stop farmers and property developers from digging up our national heritage as such activities are a hindrance to tank manoeuvres. So in this sense the Warcop Range is a good thing. On the other hand, shell holes, trenches and the curious long furrows pro-

duced by high velocity shells fired at low trajectories are very confusing for the archaeologist. An eighteenth century farmhouse, for example, used for intermittent urban guerrilla training and occasional demolition practice, very soon becomes indistinguishable from a Romano British field-system – if anything is left at all, of course.

The weather, at least, had decided to be kind and a gentle breeze cooled us as we strolled under a hot sun. Niall showed us the first site – a small moated enclosure in a pretty, wooded valley. His own theory was that it had been the home of some minor functionary – a Steward perhaps – but others were thinking "leather tannery" (because there were oak trees growing nearby, of course). Who knows – it was clearly going to be that sort of day. In the background a



Survey of the earthworks at Burton Hall, Warcop (RCHME 1999)

camouflaged figure rose to its feet ran a few yards and then threw itself back into the grass again. A machine gun opened up in the distance. It was obviously time to move on in case the two events were connected.

Following a welcome al-fresco lunch with a panoramic view of a whole fellside of monstrous tanks, all funded at unimaginable expense by the taxpayer and now reduced to rusty range-targets, the next site provided another mystery. English Heritage had listed it as a sunken road leading to an Iron Age settlement. Niall preferred his own interpretation, namely a natural water-course and a medieval stone-quarry. But there were no such doubts about the next site, a little gem with a curved ditch enclosing a large area dotted with intriguing piles of stones. It looked very similar to the Iron Age farmstead at Bank Hall Farm near Kirkland and Niall explained that he had been able to trace a chain of such farmstead enclosures spaced at fairly regular intervals alongside the fellside. Curiously though, the altitude here at almost 1500 feet made it very difficult to appreciate how the farm's economy had succeeded. Whatever, the continuity of habitation so often seen in Westmorland was sweetly demonstrated by the ruins of relatively modern farm buildings tucked into the corner of the enclosure. The army was doing its bit too by adding yet another layer of social history in the form of a cluster of silhouette targets for

close-quarter infantry-training. The mortar-shell craters seemed particularly thick on the ground here and the trunks of the blasted hawthorn trees were quite thickly studded with gleaming chunks of shrapnel. In fact it all seemed quite disturbingly fresh. Niall picked up the remains of a parachute flare and casually emptied it of white powder – but then he was presumably covered by MOD insurance. The rest of us moved smartly off in line astern, treading carefully in each other's footsteps and trying to avoid taking "point" position.

It was perhaps at this juncture that Niall pointed to a distinctive large mound further up the fellside. "That", he said, "is probably the most heavily shelled Romano British settlement in the UK. I think we'll give it a miss today". Nobody was inclined to disagree.

The final site of the day, Burton Hall, was the highlight of our visit (discounting the amazing line of demobilised BAOR tanks strung out alongside the roadside). Apparently these have been left here for inspection by the Russian military as part of Cold-war disarmament treaties. Back to archaeology – Burton Hall looked nothing like the prosperous farmhouse featured in the 1942 black and white photograph we had been shown earlier due to the fact that it has completely disappeared! Nevertheless, we were still able to view the enormous earthworks relating to earlier incarnations of the Hall dating back to the thirteenth century. These were without doubt the biggest mystery of our tour as even Niall had to admit that:

"whatever explanation you propose you can find at least ten reasons why you're wrong". His own preference was for fishponds but he clearly didn't have much confidence in this theory. There is a big challenge for somebody here – but given that the site is listed and that some of the banks have plastic fins protruding from them, none of us is much likely to want to go poking about up there!

In a way, of course, archaeology up on Warcop Range is still being created. As Niall explained, successive waves of technological development create new training demands so that the fellside already conceals a formidable history of the late twentieth century. Having thanked him profusely for his generosity in giving up a valuable Saturday for our amateur entertainment and edification (and having added quiet prayers of gratitude Elsewhere for our survival) we felt very happy to leave this particular branch of Archaeology to the professionals.

Martin Joyce



AUTUMN/WINTER PROGRAMME

Mining on the Eastern Fellside

7.30pm Tue 14th Sept

Ian Tyler from the Threlkeld Mining Museum will begin our season of talks with the theme of industrial archaeology and mining in the eastern fellside.

Polesworth:

A country pottery

7.30pm Tue 12th Oct

Dr Nigel Melton from Bradford University will be introducing us to the world of pottery studies and telling us about a site in Leicestershire.

The Development of Villages in the Eden Valley

7.30pm Tue 9th Nov

The development of local settlements will be explained by Prof. Brian Roberts who teaches in the geography department at Durham University.

Pre-conquest Ironwork from Asby-winderwath Common

7.30 Tue 14th Dec

This site near Asby was visited by the group several years ago following a chance find by metal detectorists. Ben Edwards will tell us about this exiting discovery of ironwork.

AGM and Member's Evening

7.00pm Tues 11th Jan

Our Annual General Meeting will be followed at 7.30pm by a number of short talks by members of the group. This is a good opportunity to catch up with what other members have been doing and plan the year ahead.

Talks are free to members and are held in The Supper Room, upstairs from the Appleby Market Hall. Non-members are welcome (£1.50 entrance fee).

The work of the County Archaeologist

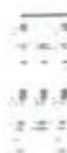
7.30pm Tue 8th Feb

The county archaeologist for Cumbria, Richard Newman will explain his work and the role of the archaeology section within Cumbria County Council. This includes the Sites and Monuments Records which are the primary resource for information on Cumbrian archaeology.

Prehistoric Rock Art

7.30pm Tue 8th Mar

This long awaited talk will be given by Stan Beckensall who is an enthusiastic amateur of the highest calibre. He has written several books on prehistoric rock art and will be explaining something of its mystery and occurrence.



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